

costs of rejecting NATO enlargement. I urge my colleagues to consider three severe costs that would be incurred should the Senate fail to ratify NATO membership for Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary:

A rejection of NATO enlargement would prompt a massive crisis in America's role as the leader of the transatlantic community. NATO enlargement is a policy that has been championed by the United States, including the United States Senate. Rejection of the resolution before us would vindicate those in Europe who express doubt and who resent U.S. leadership.

Rejection of this resolution would spread massive disillusionment across Central Europe. It would stimulate a pervasive feeling of abandonment and rekindle a sense of historic despair. This could prompt political crises. It would surely prompt a turn to more nationalist policies—including nationalist defense policies. A rejection of enlargement would reverse the remarkable development of European security around an Alliance-determined agenda—a development in no small way facilitated by the process of NATO enlargement.

Rejection of this resolution would undercut Russia's democratic evolution, stimulating Russian imperialist nostalgia. It would give great credibility to those in Russia who argue that Russia is entitled to a sphere of influence in Central Europe. That would be at the expense of those who desire Moscow to focus on the priorities of economic and political reform.

NATO enlargement is a critical, non-threatening complement to the hand of partnership that the West and NATO have extended to Russia. It ensures the secure and stable regional context in which a democratic Russia will have the best prospects for a normal, cooperative relationship with its European neighbors.

Indeed, there would have been no German-French reconciliation without NATO. And, the ongoing German-Polish reconciliation would not be possible without NATO. In fact, as one thoughtful thinker on these matters, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, has written "with NATO enlarged, a genuine reconciliation between former Soviet satellites and Russia will be both truly possible and likely."

Finally, Mr. President, NATO enlargement is fundamental to Europe's evolution into a partner that will more effectively meet global challenges before the transatlantic community. An undivided Europe at peace is a Europe that will be better able to look outward, a Europe better able to join with the United States to address necessary global security concerns. A partnership with an undivided Europe in the time- and stress-tested architecture of NATO will enable the United States to more effectively meet the global challenges to its vital interests at a time when defense resources are increasingly strained.

Mr. President, allow me to close by pointing out that NATO enlargement is a policy validated by unprecedented public and Congressional discourse on a matter of national security.

Over the last five years, NATO enlargement has been the topic of countless editorials and opinion pieces in national and local papers. Over the last two years some fourteen states, including the First State, Delaware, have passed resolutions endorsing NATO enlargement. This policy has been endorsed by countless civic, public policy, political, business, labor and veterans organizations.

NATO enlargement has also been repeatedly endorsed by the North Atlantic Assembly, an arm of the Alliance that convenes parliamentary representatives of NATO's sixteen countries. Congress has always been an active player in this organization and I have the honor today of serving as President of the NAA.

Congress, in particular, has led the charge for NATO enlargement. Its committees have examined in detail the military, intelligence, foreign policy, and budgetary implications of this long overdue initiative. Since last July alone, twelve hearings have been conducted on NATO enlargement by the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Appropriations, and Budget. The Senate NATO Observer Group, which I chair with Senator JOSEPH R. BIDEN, has convened seventeen times with, among others, the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, NATO's Secretary General, and the leaders of the three invitee countries.

For me, it is no surprise—indeed a matter of pride—that Congress has legislatively promoted NATO enlargement every year since 1994. To be exact, this chamber has endorsed NATO enlargement some fourteen times through unanimous consent agreements, voice votes and roll call votes. I only wish all dimensions of U.S. national security policy would receive this much public attention and endorsement.

Mr. President, these arguments make it clear that America's best chance for enduring peace and stability in Europe—our best chance for staying out of war in Europe, our best chance for reinforcing what has been a strong, productive partnership with Europe—is to promote a Europe that is whole, free, and secure. What better organization to do this than the North Atlantic Alliance—an organization that has kept the peace for more than fifty years and remains unmatched in its potential to meet the security challenges of the future. The extension of NATO membership to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary is a critical step to ensure that the Alliance remains true to the values of the Washington Treaty, to consolidate the gains in democracy, peace, and stability in post-Cold War Europe, and to ensure that the transatlantic community is fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the next century.

Mr. President, we should all commend the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator JESSE HELMS, for producing an outstanding resolution and ratification. He has been a true leader in the effort behind NATO enlargement. He has ensured that all Members of the Senate have had ample opportunity to be fully engaged on this important matter. I applaud his leadership. Senator HELMS and his colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee have produced, as I said, an outstanding resolution of ratification. I urge my colleagues to give it their unqualified support.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent there be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, it was just over two years ago—on Friday, February 23, 1996—that the federal debt broke the five trillion dollar sound barrier for the first time in history. The records show that on that day, at the close of business, the debt stood at \$5,017,056,630,040.53.

Just 22 years ago, in 1976, the federal debt stood at \$629 billion—and that was after the first 200 years of America's history had elapsed, including two world wars. Then the big spenders really went to work and the interest on the federal debt really began to take off—and, presto, during the past two decades the federal debt has soared into the stratosphere, increasing by more than \$4 trillion in two decades (from 1976 to 1996).

So, Mr. President, as of the close of business Monday, March 16, 1998, the federal debt stood—down-to-the-penny—at \$5,530,456,190,863.05.

This enormous debt is a festering, escalating burden on all citizens and especially it is jeopardizing the liberty of our children and grandchildren. As Jefferson once warned, "to preserve [our] independence, we must not let our leaders load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude."

Was Mr. Jefferson right, or what?